

STANTON PARK

(Reservation No. 15)

Intersection of Maryland and Massachusetts avenues  
at C Street between Fourth  
and Sixth streets, NE

Washington

District of Columbia

HABS NO. DC-686

HABS  
DC  
WASH  
637-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

STANTON PARK  
(Reservation Number 15)

HABS No. DC-686

HABS  
DC  
WASH  
637-

Location: Intersection of Maryland and Massachusetts avenues at C Street between Fourth and Sixth streets, NE.

Owner/Manager: U.S. government, National Park Service.

Use: Sitting park, monument site, playground.

Significance: The largest park L'Enfant planned in the northeast quadrant of the city, this reservation has been used as a public park since its first improvement in 1878. It is now located within the National Register Capitol Hill Historic District, and the statue of Nathaniel Greene is among those in the National Register's group listing of Washington's Revolutionary War Statues.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of plan: 1791, L'Enfant Plan; 1792, Ellicott Plan.
2. Original and subsequent owners: Within a tract of land known as Houp's Addition, owned by Jonathan Slater since 1764 and purchased by William Prout in 1791, the land for the park was acquired by the federal government for streets and avenues in 1791.<sup>1</sup>
3. First improvement: 1879.
4. Alterations and additions:

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1877: | Nathaniel Greene Statue erected.                     |
| 1905: | Small lodge moved from Garfield Park erected.        |
| 1930: | Reconditioned with new concrete paths and fountains. |
| 1964: | Reconstructed, new paths and a playground added.     |

B. Historical Context:

L'Enfant shaded the approximate area of today's Stanton Square yellow on his city plan and designated it as "No. 5." Describing his intentions for the yellow-shaded parks in his notes, he wrote:

The Squares colored yellow, being fifteen in number, are proposed to be divided among the several States in the Union, for each of them to improve, or subscribe a sum additional to the value of the land for that purpose, and the improvements around the squares to be completed in a

---

<sup>1</sup> McNeil, 43, 48.

limited time.

The center of each Square will admit of Statues, Columns, Obelisks, or any other ornaments, such as the different States may choose to erect; to perpetuate not only the memory of such individuals whose Counsels or military achievements were conspicuous in giving liberty and independence to this Country; but also those whose usefulness hath rendered them worthy of general imitation: to invite Youth of succeeding generations to tread in the paths of those Sages or heroes whom their Country has thought proper to celebrate.

The situation of these Squares is such that they are the most advantageously and reciprocally seen from each other, and as equally distributed over the whole City district, and connected by spacious Avenues around the grand Federal Improvements, and as contiguous to them, and at the same time as equally distant from each other, as circumstances would admit. The settlements round those squares must soon become connected.<sup>2</sup>

Andrew Ellicott worked from L'Enfant's general scheme to compose the official engraved plan of the city. He retained this area, but unlike L'Enfant made no recommendations for the development of this or any other intersection. Although seventeen parcels were appropriated March 30, 1791, to serve as public parks and federal reservations, this reservation was acquired by the federal government along with the land designated for streets and avenues, since it is technically within the right-of-way of the street system.

Although the 1857-61 Boschke map shows a number of buildings facing onto this open space, the avenues east of it do not appear to be cleared or graded. The federal government was responsible for improving the public grounds and grading and paving the avenues in the city. Soon after the Civil War ended, in 1867 responsibility for the city's Public Buildings and Grounds was transferred from the Department of Interior to the Army Corps of Engineers. The first officer to be assigned at the helm of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds was Nathaniel Michler, and in his first annual report to the Secretary of War, he recommended that this vacant square "formed by the meeting of Maryland and Massachusetts avenues" be enclosed by a fence and improved. Describing other neglected open spaces in this section of the city, he continued, "These are all east of the Capitol and hitherto much neglected portion of the city as far as the general government is concerned. Extensive changes have taken place there in the last few months; streets have been opened, and graded, gutters paved, curbs set, pavements laid and many houses are being built."<sup>3</sup> But Congress did not begin funding improvements in earnest until a territorial government was formed in 1871. Led by Alexander Shepherd, this government fell in scandal and debt in 1874, but during those three years made vast improvements to the city's infrastructure. Orville E. Babcock, a close friend of Alexander Shepherd, replaced Michler in 1871 and submitted in his 1872 annual report an estimate for the improvement of "Stanton Place . . . in order to keep up with the rapid and magnificent improvements being made by the city

---

<sup>2</sup> Legend on L'Enfant's 1791 plan of the city.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report . . ., 1867, 523-24.

under the able direction of the Board of Public Works."<sup>4</sup> One factor leading to the downfall of the government was its blatant neglect of the quadrants east and south of the Capitol, so despite the preliminary improvements made under Michler the roads near the reservation were largely unimproved, and the park remained unlandscaped until 1878.

The first reference to the space as Stanton Square was made in Babcock's report of 1871 and it is possible that this square was named after Edwin Stanton, Abraham Lincoln's secretary of war, at the same time its counterpart to the south was referred to informally as Seward Place after Lincoln's secretary of state. One would generally have to pass through either of these two spaces to reach the large park named after Lincoln at the intersection of Massachusetts and North Carolina avenues.

Although it was named for a Civil War-era politician, the park features a statue honoring a Revolutionary War hero. In 1874 Congress appropriated \$40,000 to erect a memorial to Gen. Nathaniel Greene and preparations were made to receive the statue in the park in 1878. Col. Thomas Lincoln Casey requested \$6,000 in his annual report of 1878 for the improvement of the park, and between August and December of 1879 it was graded and laid with paths. "The park was thoroughly improved in accordance with an approved plan," Casey wrote, "and the avenues and streets which intersected it and cut up the lawns into small and inferior patches of grass were removed. It was graded to correspond with street levels and paths were laid out. Water pipes, gas pipes, and lampposts were introduced, two rock fountains were erected and the whole square was enclosed with an iron post-and-chain fence."<sup>5</sup>

The same year the park was improved, the city's largest elementary school for white children was built facing it from the south side.<sup>6</sup> It was probably around this time that Massachusetts and Maryland avenues were graded and paved with gravel.

The OPB&G continued to maintain the park, but were faced with obstacles illustrative of the city's condition at the time. For instance, the chief engineer complained in 1885 that, "In Folger and Stanton parks the flower beds are still subject to the ravages of dogs, while fowls, which are permitted to run at large on the vicinity, do considerable damage to the lawns . . . The fountains in Lincoln and Stanton parks were repaired and put in running order, but on view of the small supply of water now available for Capitol Hill the water is not turned on for more than an hour each day"<sup>7</sup> Each summer water lilies were planted in the fountains; hyacinths, tulips, crocuses and scillas were planted at the base of the statue. A park watchman was assigned to maintain and guard this park as well as the smaller triangles in the vicinity. After repeated requests, in 1905 a lodge was moved to the park from Garfield Park to provide shelter for him.

After the turn of the century, park designs throughout the city were changed to suit modern tastes and minimize the cost of maintenance. The formal

---

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report . . ., 1872, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Annual Report . . ., 1879, 2341.

<sup>6</sup> Lee, 126-27.

<sup>7</sup> Annual Report . . ., 1885, 3837.

Mall plan developed by the McMillan Commission in 1901, as well as the rise of the City Beautiful movement, prompted OPB&G landscape architects to develop more formal and simplified plans featuring sparsely planted native foliage and paths laid straight, along the lines of travel. Stanton Square was redesigned in 1921 with a formal path design, and a new modern lodge was erected. The lodge was identical to those erected in Lincoln, Lafayette and Judiciary squares, and featured rest rooms and a storage area for the watchman.

Despite the growth of the city and the increasing commercialization of the northwest quadrant, this neighborhood remained relatively residential. A few commercial establishments were built through the 1930s, however, including a service station on the northeast corner of Fifth and C streets, a funeral home on the west, and a theater facing onto the park from the south.

The Army Corps of Engineers maintained the park, making routine changes such as the addition of new concrete fountains and walks to replace the old bituminous ones in 1930. In 1933, responsibility for the parks in the city were transferred from the Corps of Engineers to the National Park Service. In 1964, at the prompting of First Lady Ladybird Johnson's beautification program, Stanton Park was refurbished and playground equipment was erected on the west side of the park.

The neighborhood continues to be largely residential with many structures--such as the Peabody School--remaining since the days of its first improvement. In view of this historic character, the reservation was included in the Capitol Hill Historic District, recognized by the District of Columbia in 1973, and by the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. Overall dimensions: The rectangular park is approximately 570' x 330' and covers about 4.5 acres.
- B. Materials:
  - 1. Pathways, paving: A dirt jogging path encircles the park, rather than a perimeter sidewalk. Within the park there are criss-crossing diagonal paths on axis with Maryland and Massachusetts avenues meeting at wide circular walk in the center. From this central space, four smaller walkways radiate to the cross walks north and south of the park leading to Fifth Street, which is interrupted by the park. The linear walks are paved with concrete pavers, while the central circle is scored concrete. Between the diagonal paths on the west side of the park near the center circle is an area set aside for children's play. The floor of the large play space is covered with a springy rubber material. Walks to the play area are paved with square bricks.
  - 2. Vegetation: Grass is planted in the panels between the concrete paths. A formal hedge surrounds the circular walk in the center and shade and flowering trees grow throughout the park.
  - 3. Structures:
    - a. Fences, gates, retaining walls: A metal picket fence surrounds the

children's play area west of the central circle. It has two gates leading to the paths radiating to the northwest and southwest corners of the park. Temporary snowdrift fences have been installed around the center circle and several of the panels to keep pedestrians off the grass.

- b. Benches: Continuous rounded benches surround the perimeter of the central circular walk. The backed benches are constructed of wood slats on concrete supports. Similar free-standing benches are located along the walks.
- c. Statues: The equestrian statue of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Greene in the center of the park was designed by sculptor Henry Kirke Brown and erected in 1877. The 13' tall bronze statue of the Revolutionary War hero stands on a 20' tall pedestal atop a raised mound.
- d. Fountains: Two drinking fountains with concrete bases are located in the park.
- e. Lighting: Mushroom lamps are spaced evenly along the paths.

C. Site:

- 1. Character of surrounding structures: Two- and three-story residential and commercial structures surround the park. Peabody Elementary school faces the south side of the park.
- 2. Traffic patterns: Two major thoroughfares meet at the park and their traffic is routed around the park counter-clockwise in two lanes. Raised concrete dividers have been placed in the streets at the corners of the park to direct traffic flow and hold traffic signs and signals.
- 3. Vistas: The Columbus Fountain in front of Union Station is visible when looking northwest along Massachusetts Avenue from the northwest corner of the park.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps:

Boschke, A. "Topographical Map of the District of Columbia surveyed in the years '57, '58, and '59."

District of Columbia Board of Public Works. "Exhibit Chart of Improved Streets and Avenues." 1872.

Ellicott, Andrew. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1792.

L'Enfant, Pierre Charles. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1791.

Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Plan of the City of Washington, District

of Columbia, showing the Public Reservations." Prepared by Orville E. Babcock. 1871.

Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Map of the City of Washington showing the Public Reservations Under Control of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds." 1884, 1887, and 1894.

B. Park plans: See Supplemental Information below for a list of attached plans. Additional plans are located at the Office of Land Use, National Capital Region.

C. Early Views:

1903: View of Nathaniel Greene statue shows frame buildings in the vicinity (Annual Report ..., 1903).

1927: Photograph taken as part of a survey of reservations (NPS Reservation files).

D. Bibliography:

Annual Reports of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. Annual Reports of the Chief of Engineers. 1867-1933.

Lee, Antoinette J. "Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1804-1930." Unpublished manuscript. 1989.

McNeil, Priscilla W. "Rock Creek Hundred: Land Conveyed for the Federal City." Washington History 3 (Spring/Summer, 1991): 34-51.

Record Group 42, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA RG42).

Reservation files, Office of Land Use, National Capital Region.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Barthold  
Project Historian  
National Park Service  
1993

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

The Plan of Washington, D.C., project was carried out from 1990-93 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division, Robert J. Kapsch, chief. The project sponsors were the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Inc. of Washington, D.C.; the Historic Preservation Division, District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, which provided Historic Preservation Fund monies; the National Capital Region and its White House Liaison office, NPS; and the National Park Foundation Inc.

HABS historian Sara Amy Leach was the project leader and Elizabeth J. Barthold was project historian. Architectural delineators were: Robert Arzola, HABS; Julianne Jorgensen, University of Maryland; Robert Juskevich, Catholic University of America; Sandra M. E. Leiva, US/ICOMOS-Argentina; and Tomasz Zweich, US/ICOMOS-Poland, Board of Historical Gardens

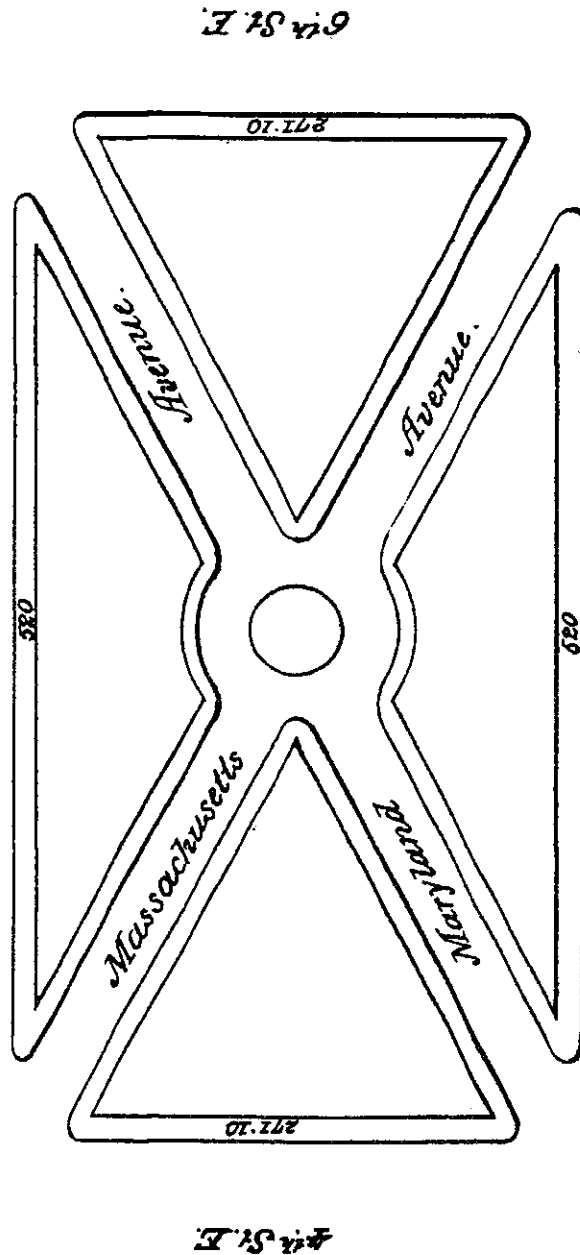
and Palace Conservation. Katherine Grandine served as a data collector. The photographs are by John McWilliams, Atlanta, except for the aerial views, which are by Jack E. Boucher, HABS, courtesy of the U.S. Park Police - Aviation Division.

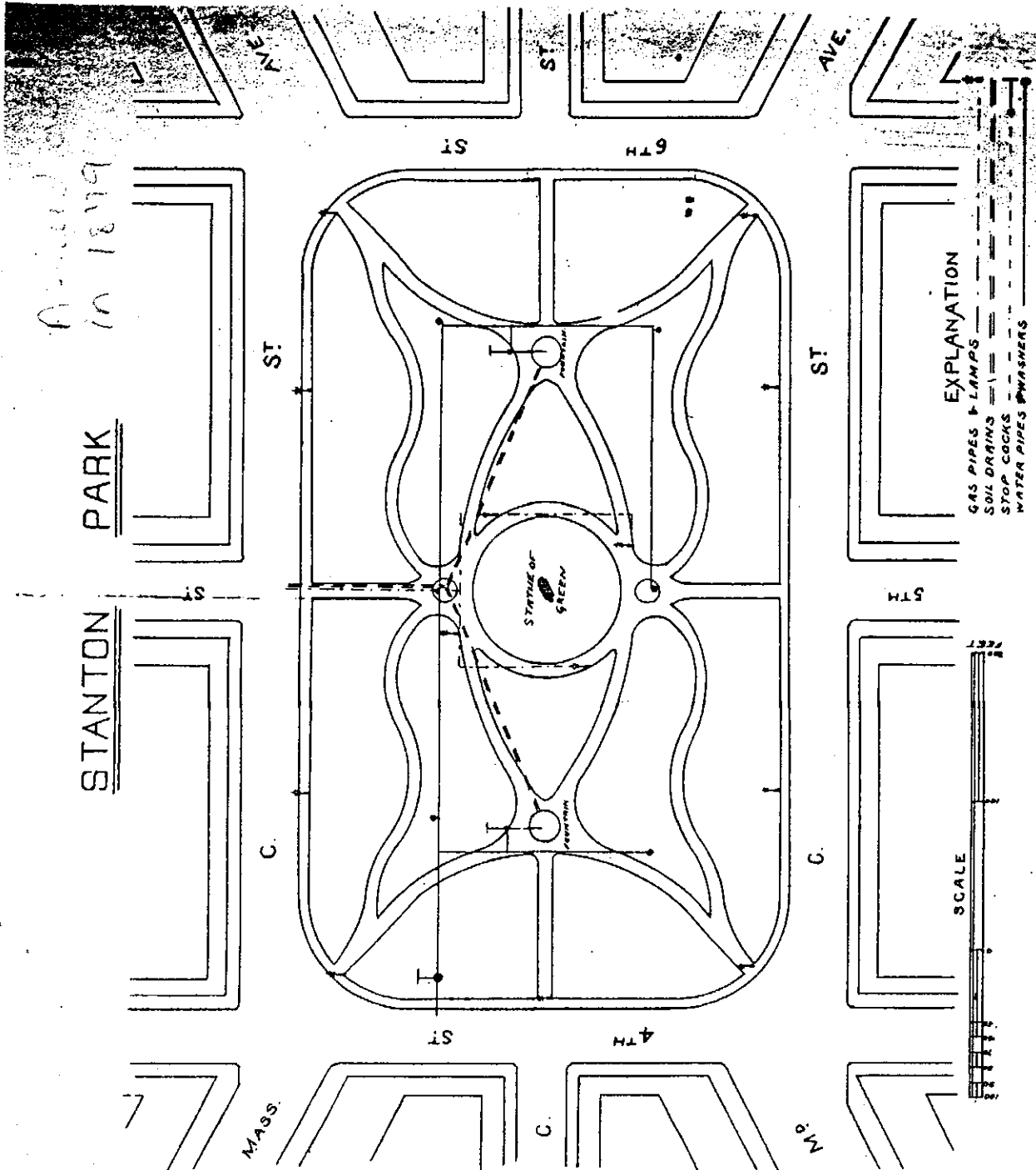
PART V.      SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

- |             |        |  |
|-------------|--------|--|
| Page 8      | 1876:  | Park plan showing both avenues continuing through the open space and intersecting at a small traffic circle in the center ("Government Reservations within the city boundaries," <u>City Lots</u> . Real Estate Directory. NARA RG42 230). |
| Page 9      | 1885:  | Park plan showing path layouts and locations of lamps, drains and underground pipes ( <u>Annual Report . . .</u> , 1885).  |
| Page 10, 11 | 1905:  | Park plan with accompanying list showing locations and species of trees ( <u>Annual Report . . .</u> , 1905).  |
| Page 12     | 1930s: | Park plan showing new path design (NPS Reservation Files).   |

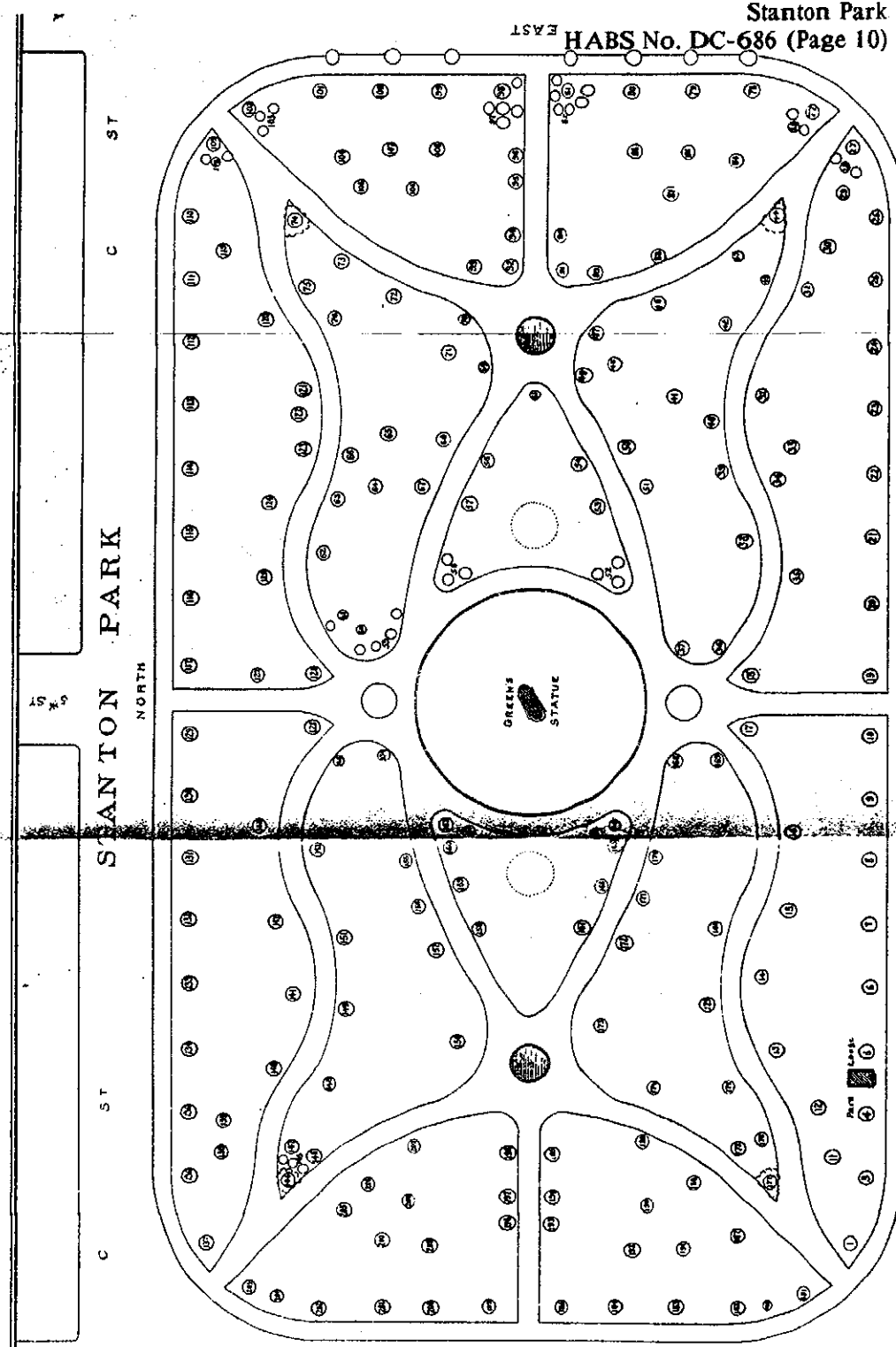


STANTON PLACE.





*To accompany Annual Report of Officer in Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1879*



Stanton Park  
HABS No. DC-686 (Page 10)

CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
U.S. ARMY  
of Public Buildings and Grounds.  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Scale in Feet.  
0 10 20 30 40 50  
George H. Brown  
Landscape Gardener

ST

5th ST

To accompany the annual report  
of the  
June 30, 1903. — Colonel D.C.

2772 REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, U. S. ARMY.

STANTON PARK.

| Numbers.   | Common name.                      | Botanical name.                               | Designation.             |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,<br>10, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23,<br>24, 25, 26, 27, 77, 78,<br>79, 80, 81, 98, 99,<br>100, 101, 102, 109,<br>110, 111, 112, 113,<br>114, 115, 116, 117,<br>129, 130, 131, 132,<br>133, 134, 135, 136,<br>137, 181, 182, 183,<br>184, 185, 199, 200,<br>201, 202, 203. | European linden .....             | <i>Tilia europea</i> .....                    | Foreign deciduous tree.  |
| 11, 12, 105, 138   | Fern-leaved beech .....           | <i>Fagus heterophylla</i> .....               | Do.                      |
| 13, 14, 15, 16, 31, 32,<br>34, 35, 38, 42, 76,<br>120, 122, 124, 125,<br>140, 141, 142, 143,<br>148, 149, 151, 152,<br>178, 179, 180.  | Norway maple .....                | <i>Acer platanoides</i> .....                 | Do.                      |
| 17, 18, 126, 128   | Box .....                         | <i>Boxus sempervirens</i> .....               | Foreign evergreen shrub  |
| 28, 83, 103, 118   | Desmodium .....                   | <i>Lespedeza penduliflorum</i> .....          | Do.                      |
| 29, 30   | Althea .....                      | <i>Hibiscus syriacus</i> .....                | Foreign deciduous shrub  |
| 33   | Squarrose-leaved cypress .....    | <i>Retinospora squarrosa</i> .....            | Foreign evergreen tree.  |
| 36, 37, 47, 49, 59, 60,<br>153, 154.   | Garland flower .....              | <i>Spiraea prunifolia</i> .....               | Foreign deciduous shrub  |
| 39, 40, 63   | Oriental spruce .....             | <i>Picea orientalis</i> .....                 | Foreign evergreen tree.  |
| 41, 64, 65, 66   | Cephalonian fir .....             | <i>Abies cephalonica</i> .....                | Do.                      |
| 43, 45, 73, 75, 148,<br>147, 175, 176.   | California privet .....           | <i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i> .....            | Foreign deciduous shrub  |
| 44, 74, 144, 174, 177.   | Spanish bayonet .....             | <i>Yucca aloifolia</i> .....                  | Native evergreen shrub.  |
| 46, 72, 88, 174, 193,<br>207.  | Weirs cut-leaved maple .....      | <i>Acer saccharinum</i> .....                 | Native deciduous tree.   |
| 48, 71   | Japanese snowball shrub .....     | <i>Viburnum plicatum</i> .....                | Foreign deciduous shrub  |
| 50, 51, 53, 64, 56, 57,<br>67, 68, 156, 158,<br>157, 158, 159, 168,<br>167, 170, 171, 172.   | Horse-chestnut .....              | <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i> .....           | Do.                      |
| 52, 58, 162, 163.  | Golden bell .....                 | <i>Forsythia viridissima</i> .....            | Do.                      |
| 55   | Purple lilac .....                | <i>Syringa vulgaris</i> .....                 | Do.                      |
| 61, 62   | Cranberry bush .....              | <i>Viburnum opulus</i> .....                  | Native deciduous shrub.  |
| 69, 70, 168, 169.  | Reeve's Spirea .....              | <i>Spiraea reevei</i> .....                   | Foreign deciduous shrub  |
| 82, 97   | Twiggy jessamine .....            | <i>Jasminum undiflorum</i> .....              | Do.                      |
| 84, 119, 150, 173.   | English field maple .....         | <i>Acer campestre</i> .....                   | Foreign deciduous tree.  |
| 85, 86, 106, 107, 108,<br>190, 191, 192, 208,<br>209, 210.   | Scarlet oak .....                 | <i>Quercus coccinea</i> .....                 | Native deciduous tree.   |
| 87   | Laurel oak .....                  | <i>Quercus imbricaria</i> .....               | Do.                      |
| 89, 90, 93, 94.  | Japanese quince .....             | <i>Cydonia japonica</i> .....                 | Foreign deciduous shrub. |
| 91, 92   | Tartarian honeysuckle .....       | <i>Lonicera tartarica</i> .....               | Do.                      |
| 95, 96, 193, 194, 196.   | Bulst's althea .....              | <i>Hibiscus syriacus bulstii</i> .....        | Do.                      |
| 104, 139, 206.   | Japanese pagoda tree .....        | <i>Sopora japonica</i> .....                  | Foreign deciduous tree.  |
| 121, 123   | English holly .....               | <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> .....                  | Foreign evergreen tree.  |
| 127  | Crape myrtle .....                | <i>Lagerstromia indica</i> .....              | Foreign deciduous shrub  |
| 146  | Japanese barberry .....           | <i>Mahonia japonica</i> .....                 | Do.                      |
| 160, 161, 164, 165.  | Deutzia shrub .....               | <i>Deutzia</i> .....                          | Do.                      |
| 186, 204.  | Sorbus-leaved Spirea .....        | <i>Spiraea sorbifolia</i> .....               | Do.                      |
| 187, 188, 206.   | Judas tree .....                  | <i>Cercis canadensis</i> .....                | Native deciduous tree.   |
| 196, 197, 198.   | Panicle flowering Hydrangea ..... | <i>Hydrangea paniculata grandiflora</i> ..... | Foreign deciduous shrub  |

**TOTAL AREA OF VARIOUS FEATURES** 35,776.65 SQ. FT.

| BRIDGES  | KIND | NO. | SQ. FT. |
|----------|------|-----|---------|
| Highway  | Foot |     |         |
| Culverts |      |     |         |

**WALKS AROUND RESERVATION**

| KIND  | LIN. FT. | WIDTH | SQ. FT. |
|-------|----------|-------|---------|
| Brick | 308.0    | 6.0   | 1848.0  |

**WATER WAYS**

| LIN. FT. | WIDTH | SQ. FT. |
|----------|-------|---------|
|          |       |         |

**RETAINING WALL**

| LIN. FT. | WIDTH | SQ. FT. |
|----------|-------|---------|
|          |       |         |

**COPING**

| LIN. FT. | WIDTH | SQ. FT. |
|----------|-------|---------|
| Stone    | 66.0  | 67      |
| Concrete |       | 44.22   |

**CURB**

| LIN. FT. | WIDTH | SQ. FT. |
|----------|-------|---------|
| Stone    | 99.90 | 3.8     |
| Concrete |       | 49.85   |

**GUTTERS**

| LIN. FT. | WIDTH | SQ. FT. |
|----------|-------|---------|
| Stone    |       |         |
| Brick    |       |         |
| Concrete |       |         |

**SPORTS**

| NO.                | SQ. FT. |
|--------------------|---------|
| Tennis Courts      |         |
| Recre Courts       |         |
| Baseball Fields    |         |
| Hockey Fields      |         |
| Ice Fields         |         |
| Cricket Fields     |         |
| Riding Grounds     |         |
| Band Stands        |         |
| Bathing Beaches    |         |
| Childrens Playgrds |         |
| Athletic Fields    |         |
| Volleyball Courts  |         |
| Football Courts    |         |
| Polo Fields        |         |
| Lacrosse Fields    |         |
| Picnic Grounds     |         |
| Golf Courses       |         |
| Bowling Greens     |         |
| Quartz Courts      |         |
| Sand Boxes         | 1       |

**FENCES**

| LIN. FT.        |
|-----------------|
| Post & Chain    |
| Pipe Rail       |
| Strand Wire     |
| Back Stop       |
| Ornamental Iron |
| Mesh Wire       |
| Tresspass Irons |

**STATUES**

| LIN. FT. |
|----------|
| 152.90   |
| 188.00   |

**PLACES**

| NO.                | SQ. FT. |
|--------------------|---------|
| Benches            | 99      |
| Display Fountains  |         |
| Drinking Fountains | 2       |
| Fountain & Lamp    |         |
| Gas Lamp Posts     | 10      |
| Elec Lamp Posts    |         |
| Fire Plugs         |         |
| Water-Stand Pipes  | 6       |
| Drainage Traps     | 1       |
| Trash Baskets      | 2       |
| Dutch Ovens        |         |

**STATUES**

| Names                    |
|--------------------------|
| Mal. Gen. Mat. Gr. 18.25 |
| Mal. Gen. Mat. Gr. 18.25 |

**TREES**

| (Kind)          | No. |
|-----------------|-----|
| Various         | 115 |
| See Map File No |     |
| 6.3-10          |     |

**RES. AREA (SQ. FT.) (ACRES)**

| RES. AREA (SQ. FT.) | (ACRES) |
|---------------------|---------|
| 202,300             | 4.645   |

**LOCATION: Bet Stanton Pl-C St & 4th St NE.**